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ABSTRACT

The problem addressed in this paper is how to design a policy or set of policies suitable to guide the National Institute of Education (NIE) in allocating funds for projects on curriculum research and development. Principles are set forth for ranking curricular needs in the allocational agenda. Three circumstances are described that would call for NIE action. These are the existence of a breakthrough in knowledge, the existence of gaps either in what is being taught or learned by the public at large and the existence of some strong national interest. Five activities in which NIE should invest are identified: (1) research; (2) development; (3) publication; (4) implementation; and (5) evaluation. (JD)

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FUNDING FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT: AN ANALYSIS OF SOME POLICY PROBLEMS

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A paper prepared for the NIE
Curriculum Development Task Force

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ABSTRACT

What policy should guide NIE in allocating funds for projects of curriculum development? This question can be answered, partially at least, by studying those circumstances that would make action inescapable and those that would make it unjustified. Presumably, those factors that, in additive fashion, would lend urgency to curriculum development are the same ones whose absence would make it unnecessary.

There are three such circumstances: (1) The existence of a breakthrough in knowledge, in pedagogy, or in the social organization of schools: (2) the existence of important gaps either in what is being taught to or learned by the population at large, or in what is being taught to and learned by identifiable sub-groups in the population; and (3) the existence of some strong national interest. Of course, these conditions take different forms. Not every kind of breakthrough will count, nor will every kind of natioal interest, nor every kind of gap in learning. Neither are these three conditions equally important. Some have more weight than others, and, in combination, they have a significance they do not have singly.

A suitable policy or decision procedure can be framed by examining the different ways that these conditions are presented and the dynamics of their interaction. To this analysis we must

then add a similar study of the principles involved in selecting from among the different activities of curriculum development -- research, development, publication, implementation and evaluation.

Funding for Curriculum Development
An Analysis of Some Policy Problems

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I

Introduction: Task Definition

The problem is to design a policy or set of policies suitable to guide NIE in allocating funds for projects of curriculum research and development. In what follows, I shall attempt to outline the elements of a solution to this problem. Furthermore, I shall attempt to do so in a way that will account for the relative weight of different considerations entering into such decisions. Thus, what follows can be viewed either as a proposed policy or as the outline of a decision procedure that can be applied to the Council or the staff of NIE.

But certain preliminaries are needed to establish the perspective of this analysis. The first is to note that if NIE is in need of policy on curriculum development, the need arises not because NIE is an educational institution. It is not. The need arises rather because NIE is a government agency. Because NIE is a government agency, there accrues to it a single power and a double necessity. The single power is the power to distribute money. The double necessity arises from the need for NIE to attend, on the one

hand, to the activities of other agencies of the Federal government, and, on the other hand, to the desires of the constituencies of education, such as they are. The perspective adopted here is that the second of these necessities tends to be controlled by the first. In other words, the future of NIE is dependent entirely upon its capacity to attach a very large carrot to the end of a barely manageable stick. And the accomplishment of this feat depends first upon attention to inter-agency and Congressional politics and only secondly upon the capacity of NIE to relate effectively to the problems of education and the desires of educational constituencies. What is called for, in short, is not educational policy -- which NIE has no capacity to establish -- but allocational policy -- which it has no capacity to avoid.

The second important point is to note that any attempt to formulate policy on curriculum development is necessarily artificial if it does not consider the magnitude of the resources available to the agency and other demands on those resources. Nonetheless, a consultant can lay aside such considerations even while admitting that no manager of the agency can afford the same luxury. Hence, in this analysis no consideration whatever is given to the important, even decisive, question as to whether NIE should invest in projects of curricular research or development relative to other urgencies. The best we can do is to expose those considerations that might raise questions of curriculum to a serious level relative to other competing demands.

We can approach our problem then by bracketing the potential answers. We can identify first those conditions under which NIE could do no other than act on matters curricular and those in which such action would be unjustified. We can describe the factors whose presence would make investment in curriculum development vitally important on the assumption that they are the same ones whose absence will render such action unnecessary.

II

Principles for Ranking Curricular Needs in the Allocational Agenda

There are three circumstances that would lend urgency to investment in curriculum development. They are (1) the demonstrated or presumed existence of breakthroughs (2) gaps, or (3) some presiding national interest. I refer to the existence of breakthroughs in knowledge, in pedagogy, or in the social organization of schools. Similarly, I refer to gaps in what is taught to or learned by the school population on the whole or gaps in what is taught to or learned by particular sub-groups within the school population.

Of course, these circumstances may confront us in many different ways. Not every breakthrough is serious enough to warrant curricular effort. Nor will equal weight attach to every gap in what is learned and taught to every public interest. Nonetheless, in the absence of any of these circumstances in any of their various forms, it seems unlikely that investment in curriculum research

or development could be justified. Suppose the agency were to mount a substantial effort at curriculum development in the absence of apparent breakthroughs, gaps, or any evident national interest. A detached observer could view that decision as sufficient evidence that the agency is over-funded, that it can afford to undertake projects for which there is no real urgency.

I do not claim that these three conditions are the only ones that will suffice to make curriculum development a serious allocational issue. But no such claim is necessary. We require merely, the definition of two limits, the first described by those conditions that would leave such an investment unjustified and the second by those that would make it unavoidable. The three conditions identified seem sufficient for that purpose. Their joint presence will make such an allocation essential, and their collective absence will make it indefensible. They bracket the limits within which we are likely to find a suitable policy. Consider the three in more detail.

Breakthroughs: By a breakthrough, is meant some sudden or substantial change, consisting either of (1) an advancement in some field of knowledge (2) an improvement in pedagogy of substantial magnitude, or (3) a change in the organization of schools requiring the creation of new instructional materials or plans.

Not every breakthrough in knowledge, however, is likely to create a need for curricular development. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls was a highly significant advance in the field of

Biblical scholarship. It was a breakthrough. Yet it did not lead to any need for curriculum development of the kind that could be justified by an agency like NIE. On the other hand, the rapid reorganization of biology and genetics over the past two decades into a closer association with bio-chemistry is a kind of breakthrough that does entail a need for new curricula. The reformation, or better, the reconceptualization, of mathematics in relation to logic, following on the work of Russell and Whitehead, constituted a similar breakthrough culminating in the so-called "new math" of the 50s.

These three examples can be placed on a continuum. The first and second constitute genuine advances in a field of knowledge. All of them are breakthroughs in what is known. But not all would suggest a need for curricular development. Why not? When do such breakthroughs in knowledge count and when do they not?

It might be argued that such breakthroughs in knowledge are no more likely to occur in the natural sciences and engineering than in the humanities and social sciences. And that may be granted. But the fact remains that breakthroughs in the natural sciences and engineering will have more weight for curriculum development because they are more likely to produce radically new tools for human use, and to produce new conceptualizations of whole fields of knowledge. They are more likely to produce knowledge that supplants whole areas of curriculum. In contrast to the humanities and

the social sciences, breakthroughs in the natural sciences and engineering are unlikely to be mere accretions. But there is a second factor -- always assumed but seldom stated -- that influences what breakthroughs are likely to count. It is simply that no breakthroughs in any area of knowledge will count heavily in estimating the need for curricular reform unless they occur in areas of knowledge generally assumed to fall within the responsibility of the schools to teach. Since biblical scholarship is not normally included among the subjects of the school, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls is unlikely to require curriculum development.

But breakthroughs may occur in other ways than through advances in the various fields of study. They are always fondly hoped for and may even occur from time to time in the practice of pedagogy. A better way to teach reading, history or calculus may require curriculum revision and may justify its support. On the other hand, it may not. Distinguish! Some breakthroughs in pedagogy only require changes in the practice of instruction. What needs modification in that case is the practice of the teacher, not necessarily the curriculum. On the other hand, it can, and does, happen that new developments in our understanding of how certain skills are acquired or how certain areas of knowledge are entered may require curriculum development. But still, some will count more heavily than others. Suppose we need to decide between funding an effort to develop curricula implementing a new approach to the teach-

ing of reading, and a new approach to the teaching of calculus. All other things being equal, no doubt the decision should be to invest in the project on reading. A breakthrough in how to teach calculus is less serious than a breakthrough in how to teach reading or the elementary skills of calculation, because fewer are touched by the need to know calculus. In that sense the breakthrough in reading and elementary computation is more basic, more serious, and more weighty.

Breakthroughs in pedagogy are important whenever they occur. They should be encouraged. But though they are important, they are not equally important. They are more weighty when they occur in the so-called "basics" than when they occur in the more advanced levels of the system and the more advanced topics of subject matter. We shall see in a moment, however, that all things are seldom equal. There are circumstances that would justify laying aside this principle of ranking.

Before turning to these exceptions, however, let us consider yet a third kind of breakthrough. Powerful arguments for curriculum development can rest upon breakthroughs other than those stemming from advances of knowledge or improvements in pedagogy. They may rest upon substantial changes in the social organization of schools or the instructional process in schools. I have in mind such programs as experience based career education, competency based education, open education, and the quest to find substitutes for schools.

These are efforts to change the sociology of the school. It is quite plausible to argue that we can have no adequate test of such efforts to change the instructional system unless they are accompanied by substantial programs of curriculum development. Thus, they would justify heavy investment in curriculum research and development. Within this category, I would include such efforts as individually prescribed instructions and mastery learning on the grounds that though they are usually advanced as improvements in pedagogy, their importance for curriculum policy rests upon the fact that their implementation requires social changes in the instructional process.

We may note then that investment in curriculum development may be justified by the existence, or presumed existence of breakthroughs of various kinds. But, as we shall see, the policy arguments thus produced are relatively weak if they stand alone. And we have already noted that the principles involved in ranking such considerations are different for the different kinds of breakthroughs. Breakthroughs in knowledge are more important if they occur in certain disciplines and are of no importance unless they occur in areas of knowledge already included within the existing school subjects. The relative importance of breakthroughs in pedagogy, rests however, upon a different principle. They will be of great or little weight depending upon whether they occur at the elementary levels of the system and within the "basic" topics of what is to be learned.

When we are faced with breakthroughs in knowledge or in pedagogy, we have the grounds for defending investment in curriculum development. And those grounds can be described quite independently of other policy considerations. They arise from "educational" arguments. But breakthroughs in the social organization of schools have no such independent character. If implementing competency based education requires curriculum development, it follows, that the strength of the policy argument rests entirely upon a prior commitment to the advancement of competency-based education. The strength of such arguments, in short, rests upon the existence of some prior national interest, and not simply upon educational considerations alone. Thus, we begin to see how the three factors of breakthroughs, gaps, and national interests interact in establishing the dynamics of the policy arguments that can occur around allocational issues of curriculum development.

Gaps: There is, of course, a strong relationship between breakthroughs of various sorts, on the one hand, and gaps, on the other hand. Breakthroughs in knowledge are important because they create gaps for everyone on what is learned. They mean either that what is learned in the schools is out-dated, or not true, or that the skills acquired are no longer the appropriate ones. A gap is created between what is known in a particular field of knowledge and what is being learned or taught about it. A corresponding, but different, kind of gap occurs when children come to school having

already learned more in a certain field of knowledge than the curriculum is prepared to acknowledge. By playing with hand calculators or by viewing television, children may have learned already much that the curriculum assumes they must be taught. This creates another kind of gap between what is known and what is taught.

Though breakthroughs in knowledge create gaps between what is known and what is taught, breakthroughs in pedagogy and in the social organization of schools may create the change to overcome such gaps. That is part of their appeal, and the principle that makes the existence of such breakthroughs important.

But there are gaps of still other sorts, gaps that would be regarded as serious not because what is learned is outdated or inappropriate, but because the distribution of achievement is inequitable and unjustified. We assume that the capacity to learn is not distributed according to race, class, sex or ethnic identification. Yet we know that there are differences in school achievement strongly associated with membership in these groups. Between white and black, between Anglo and Chicano, or between social classes, there are gaps of a different sort than those that arise from breakthroughs in knowledge. A curriculum project promising to narrow the gap between what is known in the various subjects of the school and what is taught would have prima facia justification to be funded. But the argument in its support will be still stronger if it rests also upon the claim to close the gap between different social groups in the levels of achievement.

Now there are two observations important about this last principle. Clearly the importance of closing gaps in achievement would have more or less weight in allocational decisions depending upon the strength of the national interest in equity. Secondly, if that national priority is very strong, then the maximum appeal for investment in curriculum development at the national level would be an appeal to develop curricula based upon a pedagogical breakthrough and focused upon the lower achievement groups in the population to the exclusion of all other groups.

There are two reasons why this would be the maximum policy argument given a strong national interest in equity. The first is that closing the gap in achievement requires, in principle, changing the rates of learning of disadvantaged children relative to those whose rates of learning are already high. The assumption is that closing such a gap cannot be accomplished by depressing the rates of learning of any successful social group. But it is also highly probable that gains in the efficiency of the instructional process are likely to be employed first by those schools and by those social groups that already are succeeding. In that case, any gain in the efficiency of instruction through curriculum development is likely to make the gap even larger because it will be employed first by those whose gains in achievement are already substantial. Therefore, the maximum strategy for closing gaps in achievement is to focus on these populations whose levels of achievement are low and do so to the exclusion of others.

The second point is to observe that the policy arguments resulting from such a combination of breakthroughs and gaps would be stronger at the Federal and State levels of the system than at any other. And this is so because equity or equality of treatment is fundamentally not an individual interest at all. In general, parents do not seek for their children an equal opportunity. What they seek is the best they can get, which always turns out, in the long run, to be an interest in getting something better than most others do get. At a micro-scopic level of analysis, an interest in inequality is endemic. It is vastly more powerful than any interest in equality. Nor are parents likely to be satisfied if children on the whole and in general do rather well. Their interests are not aggregate, but quite specific. They are concerned that their own children do well.

A concern with equity, on the other hand, is clearly an aggregate concern. But so are policy considerations generally. We do not make policy for the private good of specific individuals. We make policy with an eye on what is good, on the whole, and in general. Policies require attention to human goods at a fairly high level of generality. They deal with the public good, not individual goods. Equity is such an aggregate concern. It arises primarily as a concern of State and Federal government, and it rests ultimately upon constitutional requirements rather than individual interests. Thus, considerations of equity are strong at State and National

levels of the educational polity than at the level of the school or district. Where there is a strong national interest in equity, then policy arguments urging investment in curriculum are likely to be stronger yet if the investment promises to advance the interests of equity than if it does not. The strongest argument, under such conditions, would include the claim that closing gaps in achievement levels is a positive duty of government.

Here again we see that the allocational arguments in support of curriculum development will derive from the interaction between breakthroughs, gaps, and the presence or absence of a stronger national interest.

National Interests: Indeed, for a federal agency, the existence of strong national interests and strong federal policy will be of such importance that it can override all other considerations. If breakthroughs in science and engineering are more weighty ordinarily than breakthroughs in the humanities and social sciences, this principle can be laid aside if there comes to be a strong national interest in moral education, in professional and civic ethics, in history or literature. If pedagogical breakthroughs in the teaching of basics are ordinarily more weighty than those at advanced levels and advanced topics, then this principle can be laid aside in the face of strong interests to rapidly increase the numbers of scientists and engineers through higher education. If the federal concern with equity declines in strength, then alloca-

tional decisions on curriculum development will be substantially altered.

In general, we can say that which breakthroughs and which gaps in learning are regarded as weighty in policy decisions will depend most strongly upon the presence or absence of strong national interests and federal policy on other matters than education. Though a gap in biblical studies may be viewed as irrelevant, it could become significant by attaching it to the advancement of some strong national interest. Therefore, any policy argument urging NIE investment in curriculum development must include a judgment on the presence or absence and relative strength of some national interest in the case. It would have to include, in short, a political judgment, and an assessment of the strength of national policy impinging upon curriculum development. Failure to include such a judgment would probably have the result of reducing the size of NIE's carrot and the length of its stick. On the other hand, in the absence of any strong and identifiable national interest in the matter, the allocational decision could be made entirely on educational grounds. In that case, the principles that I have already outlined for ranking the weight of breakthroughs and gaps would apply to the allocational arguments without modification.

National interests, like breakthroughs and gaps, are all important in the total scheme of things, but they are not equally important in the formation of policy. Some will have more weight

than others. For purposes of this analysis it may suffice to mark two distinctions that influence the appropriate weighting that judgment should attach to national interests in curriculum development. The first is a distinction between long-term and short-term interests. The second is a distinction between policies attending to the modal trends of education and policies that focus upon the variance from those trends.

These are different distinctions; yet they intersect. They interact. Long-term interests tend to be derived from attention to the modal trends in the educational system. Short-term interests, on the other hand, tend to arise from attention to the variance from those modal trends, because Congressional and inter-agency policy processes are highly political and political analysies almost always must attend to existing interests and the degree of variance from central social trends. Thus, we may urge attention to the creation of new relations between the educational system and the employment structure of our society, and we may do so with an eye on major and quite generalized needs. But the political analysis of such a policy direction will require detailed attention to what populations are most in need, in what magnitude, and for what services.

Part of the problem in framing NIE policy for curriculum development arises from the need to formulate proposals to meet long-term and modal developments and to defend them in terms of a

political analysis that is short-term. It is difficult to chart a course of action that will be needed in five years and defend it on grounds that appeal to present interests. In short, the agency is caught in the necessity of balancing these kinds of concerns. How can it be done?

III

The Activities of Curriculum Development and the Allocational Agenda

We are now very nearly in a position to establish a set of priorities to guide allocational decisions. But one further step is needed. We have outlined some principles useful in thinking about the question "When should NIE invest in curriculum research and development?" But the questions remains, "In what activities should NIE invest?" We can identify five such activities: (1) research (2) development (3) publication (4) implementation and (5) evaluation.

We may discard further consideration of certain of these activities and deal in more detail with the remainder. Let us remind ourselves of two elementary facts. First, there already is an educational system of considerable size and power, and it does not exist without curricula. Secondly, the production, publication and marketing of curricular materials for that educational system is a large, and sometimes profitable, business, especially when the curricular materials are intended for a large proportion of the total school-age population. We may lay it down as a principle

that NIE has no reason to engage in the publication, implementation, or evaluation of curricula when those activities are already carried out by an existing publication and marketing system.

Are we to regard this principle as inviolable? Does it formulate a categorical prohibition? Of course not. I advance it as a principle in order to establish a presumption, that is to say, in order to clearly establish where lies the burden of proof. In cases of felony the presumption is the innocence of the accused, which places the burden of proof on the prosecution. Analogously, I wish to establish the presumption that in the face of an existing educational system with existing curricula and a large and active commercial system for development, publication, and implementation of curricula, the presumption must be that NIE does not engage in such activities. The burden of proof lies on the side of demonstrating that it should. Let us refer to this principle as The Principle of Restriction.

We may now press the matter further and develop a set of criteria that will specify what the proof would have to establish. Examine the following list, and especially the way that the list is ordered.

Curricular Activities

1. Research
2. Development
3. Publication
4. Implementation
5. Evaluation

Consider activities 2, 3, and 4. These activities are ordered in that sequence which best ill strates the burden of proof created by the presumption of The Principle of Restriction. That is to say, The Principle of Restriction would imply that #4 can be a justified activity for NIE only if #3 is also, and that #3 can be justified as a legitimate activity of NIE only if #2 is also. We may put the matter conversely by saying that NIE would be justified in investing in curricular development only if it is necessary in order to make publication commercially feasible; and similarly, that NIE would be justified in underwriting curriculum publication only to the extent that it is necessary in order for implementation to be commercially practicable.

Do such circumstances ever arise? They certainly do. They arise sometimes when there are breakthroughs or gaps, and when the risk or the costs incurred in curriculum development are too great or when the potential market is too small. One need only think of breakthroughs in teaching reading, in the application of mastery learning principles or in the development of various individualized approaches to instruction. One might also consider the curricular needs of special groups in the population such as those requiring bi-lingual instruction, the size of the market for home study, or the extensive development costs of computer simulations used in instruction. In these cases, the market may be too small and the development costs too large to make the full range of curricular

activities practicable for the established system of development, publication, and marketing to find attractive.

The Principle of Restriction does not, therefore, erect an inflexible prohibition against NIE engaging in curriculum development, publication, and implementation. It does, however, locate the burden of proof should such activities be suggested, and it helps to make explicit what the justification for such activities would have to establish. The Principle of Restriction, in short, establishes the priorities for NIE among the activities of curriculum development.

But what of the activities of research and evaluation? We have said nothing about them. With absolute assurance of being contradicted on the point, we may suggest, nonetheless, that they do not properly belong in the list of curriculum development activities. We have already seen that the research that counts is the research that promotes breakthroughs, including breakthroughs in pedagogy, and the research that identifies the location and magnitude of gaps of all kinds. On the matter of evaluation of curricula we may apply a variance of The Principle of Restriction. The burden of proof is clearly on the shoulders of anyone suggesting that NIE should be engaged in evaluating curricula that it has no part in developing. The case, it seems to me, would be enormously difficult to establish. Of course, it is true that NIE should seek to elicit some evaluation of any activities it enters. But this injunction arises not because evaluation is a part of the curricular enterprise,

but because it is a political necessity. It is just a part of good and responsible public stewardship.

We are finally in a position to state categories of the appropriate priorities in a most perfunctory fashion. Consider the two sets of considerations that we have examined and the dynamics that they establish for policy decision.

II	III
The Elements of Policy Arguments on Curriculum Development	The Activities of Curriculum Development
1. Breakthroughs in	1. Development
a. Knowledge b. Pedagogy c. School Organization	
2. Gaps in	2. Publication
a. Learning b. Achievement Levels	
3. National Interests	3. Implementation
a. Long run/short run b. Modal/Variant	

Note the following about these two lists: (1) They have different internal logics. The first is a list of items that operate in an additive fashion. The second is sequential. The first is a list of elements any one of which will provide grounds for an argument in support of curriculum development. But with each additional

item appealed to in that list, the argument will become stronger. (1) The strongest appeal for NIE to engage in curriculum development would be one that combines all three items in the first list and a maximum number of sub-items. Note further that the strongest single item in this additive scheme of things is #3. The existence of a strong national interest is sufficient even to make things possible that were before prohibited. (2) The existence of a strong national interest in curriculum development, even without any justification in the other two items, would probably constitute the second strongest appeal. (3) The third strongest appeal would consist in a policy argument resting on the first two items in the list without the third, and (4) the fourth strongest appeal would probably be an argument grounded in the first or second taken singly. If there is any value to the analysis presented here, then this sequence in the strength of the policy arguments may be taken as establishing priorities or a decision procedure for ranking proposed courses of action.

(2) The first of these lists is additive in its logic. The second is sequential. But now we must observe that the relation between these lists is also sequential. The second set of considerations does not even become relevant unless there is already established an allocational argument based in the first set. In other words, we do not ask, "Which set of activities of curriculum development should we engage in?" unless we have already established that we should engage in some. I am tempted to suggest that the stronger

the case is grounded in the first list, that is to say, the higher the priority, the farther will we be justified in progressing through the steps of the second list.

In Conclusion: We began with the problem of designing a policy or set of policies suitable to guide NIE in allocating funds for projects of curriculum research and development. We end having only outlined the elements of such decisions and the structure of the arguments leading to a decision. Within the structure of argument presented here there is plenty of room for debate on many important questions. I have made no attempt to identify the emerging social trends that are likely to render curriculum development a question of increasing importance. But this may be justified on the grounds that such forecasts are more often wrong than right and wherever those trends may eventually lead, the arguments, I suspect, will not depart from the decision schemata that I have outlined. I have not discussed the different versions of the meaning of "curriculum" itself because I suspect that, however that question might be resolved, it would probably have no effect upon the structure of the policy arguments that will determine allocational decisions. In short, though we do not have in this analysis a set of specific policies, we do have a method of thinking about proposals and giving them some order and ranking according to their seriousness for an agency like NIE.